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Winter Observations on Anna's Hummingbird.

BY W. O. EMERSON, HAYWARDS, CAL.

[Read before the Northern Division of the Cooper Orn. Club, Sep. 3, 1898.]

NO OTHER group of birds possesses such mysterious interest as the hummingbirds whose brilliancy of plumage entitles them to be called "gems of the air." Living among highly colored flowers from the tropics to the icy north, never in the dust of the earth, the hues of the rainbow are theirs. During the open winter of 1897-98 I had an opportunity to see the hardy Anna's Hummingbirds every day around my house, among the flowering shrubs and blossoming eucalyptus trees. From November 12 they became so common that at any time one or two could be seen resting on the ends of cherry branches or gathering gnats or sweets from the eucalyptus blossoms. One was shot on the 21st which surprised me on picking it up to see that it had not yet attained the perfect helmet. Around the base of the bill were still a number of pin-feathers. Another, collected on the 25th, had only one-half of the crown patch developed, the other feathers at the base of the bill being still in silvery cases. From this I judge that many males do not get their adult feathers till late in winter.

On the 26th and 27th a dozen or more could be seen chasing one another through the eucalypti, scolding and twittering like young swallows. This was more to be noticed among the males, the females many times sitting side by side on the same branch. December growing cooler, only one now and then would be seen in the early forenoon or near dusk, although males were shot on the 2nd, 11th, 19th, 21st and 25th, no females being seen. One

on the 21st had a few pin feathers in the throat patch; one on the 25th had eight or nine perfect feathers in the helmet, the rest of a dull grayish color and the throat patch mottled and incomplete. On cold mornings the hummingbirds would flutter around, hardly able to move their wings, flying in a dull, stupid way as though scarcely awake, but as the air grew warmer they became more lively. Jan. 15 a male was taken which showed a perfect rusty grayish helmet from bill to base of skull, where there are ten or twelve adult feathers lined up around the outer edge. The throat was more of the pattern of the females, being of a grayish lustre, with a reflection of the Ruby-throat. One shot on the 10th had a few feathers at the base of the bill. A female, the first one seen, was shot on the 10th. Another was noticed early in the morning, gathering spider webs along the cypress hedge.

I find no data in any work regarding this winter transition of the male's helmet and throat patch. February 24, 1898, full-fledged young were flying about the garden, showing very early nesting. The data for the first nest found in the past ten years shows a range of four months, as follows: Feb. 22, 1882; Feb. 25, 1883; April 20, 1884; Feb. 21, 1885; Jan. 19, 1886; Jan. 14, 1887; March 20, 1888; March 23, 1889; March 20, 1890 and March 12, 1897. As the cherry trees began to bloom by March 16, 1898, a wave of migration occurred at Haywards. Great numbers of Allen's Hummingbirds appeared and Anna's became more abundant.

Echoes from the Field.

Ravens Nesting on a Railroad Bridge. On April 10th last a sheep-herder brought me a set of three eggs of the American Raven, and on questioning him concerning the nest I learned they were taken from a nest beneath a railroad bridge. This seemed odd, to say the least, as I know of several of their nests on inaccessible cliffs, the birds seeming to intuitively know that man is their enemy. Recently I visited the locality from which the eggs came to verify the truthfulness of the collector's description and to secure the remaining eggs of the set if they had been laid. We travelled some twelve miles of sage desert and came in sight